

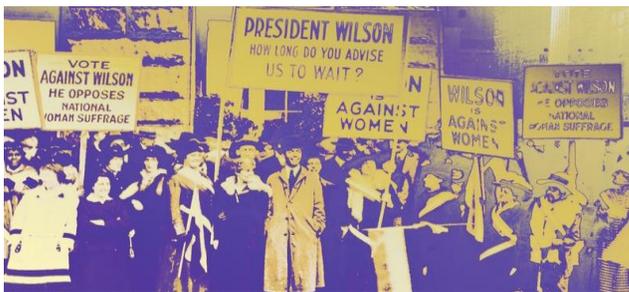


THE PRESIDENT
WOODROW WILSON HOUSE

Women's History at the Woodrow Wilson House – Eyes on 2020

The Wilson House is launching an exciting, expansive project of reinterpreting the Woodrow and Edith Wilson's historic home. This project includes a reexamination of the Wilson legacy through the lens of African American history and women's history.

- **Suffrage:** Wilson ascended to the presidency in the same moment that the women's suffrage movement was gaining unprecedented mobilization and success. It had been nearly seven decades since Elizabeth Cady Stanton had drafted the "Declaration of Sentiments" at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 calling for women's enfranchisement. While President Wilson was initially hesitant to join women activists in their call for universal women's suffrage, the 19th Amendment was passed and ratified during his



presidency in 1920. The Wilson House is a perfect space in which to explore the history of the suffrage movement through a new exhibit and programming initiative, "Start to (Un)Finished – The Radicalization of the Women's Suffrage Movement and the Passing of the 19th Amendment."

- Ellen Axson Wilson- Woodrow's first wife- and their daughters, Eleanor, Margaret, and Jessie, all supported the suffrage movement while Edith Wilson, his second wife, held more conservative views in tune with her southern upbringing, and opposed the amendment.
- As the home of the president who made the unfortunate mistake of re-segregating the federal government, the Wilson House also offers a uniquely appropriate space in which to interpret the role of race and segregation in the women's suffrage movement. The battle for women's suffrage consistently abided by the ideology of segregation, barring African American women from joining local chapters of the NAWSA (National American Women's Suffrage Association). Black women and men, including Adela Hunt Logan, Mary Church Terrell, Ida B. Wells, and W.E.B. Dubois, nevertheless organized, editorialized, and marched for women's right to vote as integral to Progressive Era civil rights activism. Even women's suffrage marches were segregated and often restricted Black women's organizations to the rear sections. Ida B. Wells famously protested this segregation by demanding to march with the Illinois delegation or not at all at the 1913 march in Washington DC. She marched alongside white suffragists with members of the Alpha Suffrage Club of Chicago, an organization she founded.

- **Native American women:** Edith Wilson's claim that she was a descendant of Pocahontas is the foundation of the Wilson House's collections of objects relating to Pocahontas and Native American Indian history. With these collections, and more research, the Wilson House will develop programming and interpretation relating to Native American Indian women's history, especially that diverse community's role in the battle for suffrage, civil rights, and Native American sovereignty.



- **Prohibition:** Though Wilson vetoed the Prohibition Amendment, Congress nonetheless overrode his veto to outlaw the sale of alcohol. The movement to restrict alcohol consumption was largely led by women for more than half a century- many of its advocates were prominent suffragists.

- **Fashion:** Edith Wilson was one of the first First Ladies to make fashion an integral part of the First Lady's prominent public persona. Her extensive collection of pieces from French designers highlights women's roles as international consumers, while her tastes showcase the culture of the Progressive era and the changing nature of women's dress in the 20th century.



- **Mary Scott:** Mary Scott and her husband, Isaac, were employed by the Wilsons from the time the Wilsons left the White House in 1921 through the 1950s. The Wilson House showcases the ways in which Mary's role as housekeeper and an African American woman defined modern domestic service work, especially after the first Great Migration of African American migrants from the rural south to northern urban centers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Mary's descendants would also become prominent civil rights activists. Her grandniece, Angela Wyatt, became one of the first African American children to enter old Maryland Park Junior High School in the wake of the landmark 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision.

*To become a sponsor or for additional information about the **Women's History at the Woodrow Wilson House – Eyes on 2020** please contact Wilson House Executive Director Elizabeth Karcher, ekarcher@WoodrowWilsonHouse.org or 202-387-4062.*